

# The Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct



The Code of Conduct has been developed for and by the Victorian teaching profession; it identifies a set of principles, which describe the professional conduct, personal conduct and professional competence expected of a teacher by their colleagues and the community.

It is based on the values set out in the accompanying Code of Ethics - **integrity, respect** and **responsibility** - and draws on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers as well as codes of conduct for teachers and early childhood teachers developed by other registration and education authorities.

The Code of Conduct applies to all teachers and early childhood teachers registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

## **PURPOSE**

The Code of Conduct codifies what is already common practice within the teaching profession.

Its purpose is to

- promote adherence to the values teachers see as underpinning their profession
- provide a set of principles to guide teachers in their everyday conduct and assist them to solve ethical dilemmas
- affirm the public accountability of the teaching profession
- promote public confidence in the teaching profession.

The Code of Conduct is not a disciplinary tool, nor will it cover every situation. There may be policies or procedures set down by a sector or education setting in which a teacher works, or there may be specific issues covered by an industrial agreement or award.



# Section 1

## Professional conduct

Teachers' professional conduct is characterised by the quality of the relationships they have with their learners, the parents / carers of their learners, and families, communities and their colleagues.

### RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEARNERS

#### PRINCIPLE 1.1 TEACHERS PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL LEARNERS TO LEARN

The main focus of teaching is the learning of those being taught. Teachers demonstrate their commitment to learning by

- knowing their learners well, respecting individual differences and catering for individual abilities
- maintaining a safe and challenging learning environment
- accepting professional responsibility for the provision of quality teaching
- having high expectations of every learner, and recognising and developing individual's abilities, skills and talents
- considering all viewpoints fairly
- communicating well and appropriately with their learners.

#### PRINCIPLE 1.2 TEACHERS TREAT THEIR LEARNERS WITH COURTESY AND DIGNITY

Teachers

- work to create an environment which promotes mutual respect
- model and engage in respectful and impartial language
- protect learners from intimidation, embarrassment, humiliation or harm
- enhance learner autonomy and sense of self worth, and encourage learners to develop and reflect on their own values
- respect a learner's privacy in sensitive matters, such as health or family problems, and only reveal confidential matters when appropriate

That is

- if the learner has consented to the information being used in a certain way
- to prevent or lessen a serious threat to life, health, safety or welfare of a person (including the learner)
- as part of an investigation into unlawful activity
- if the disclosure is required or mandated by law
- to prevent a crime or enforce the law
- refrain from discussing learners' personal problems in situations where the information will not be treated confidentially
- use consequences commensurate with the offence when disciplining learners.

#### PRINCIPLE 1.3 TEACHERS WORK WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

In fulfilling their role, teachers carry out a wide range of responsibilities. They support learners by knowing their strengths and the limits of their professional expertise.

Teachers

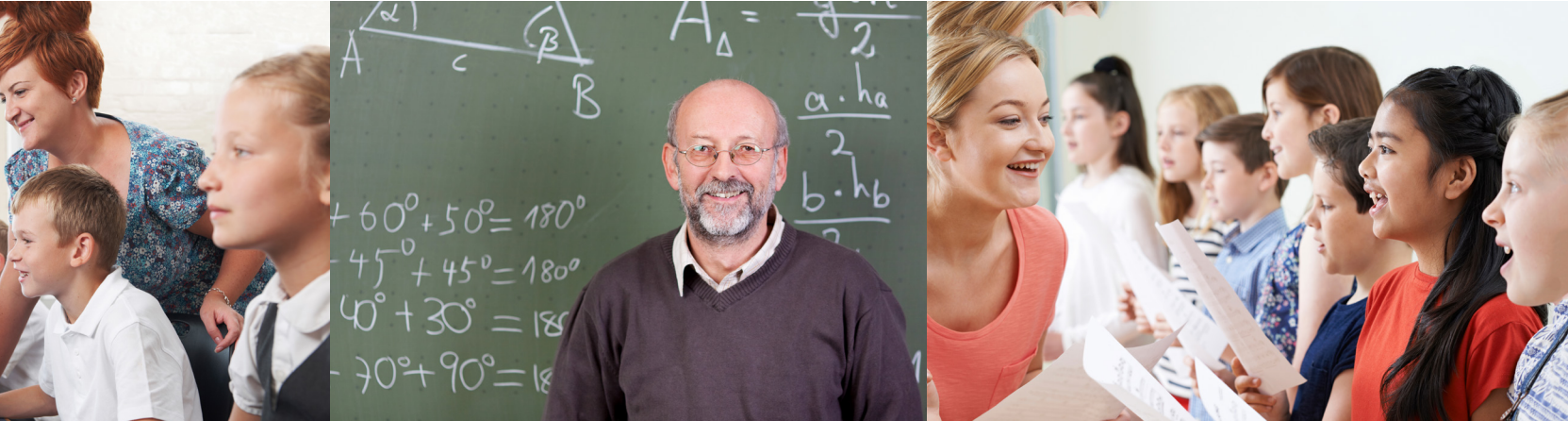
- seek to ensure they have the physical, mental and emotional capacity to carry out their professional responsibilities
- are aware of the role of other professionals and agencies as well as when learners should be referred to them for assistance
- are truthful when making statements about their qualifications and competencies.

#### PRINCIPLE 1.4 TEACHERS MAINTAIN OBJECTIVITY IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEARNERS

In their professional role, teachers do not behave as a friend or parent / carer.

They

- interact with learners without displaying bias or preference
- make decisions in learners' best interests
- do not draw learners into their personal agendas
- do not seek recognition at the expense of professional objectivity and goals.



**PRINCIPLE 1.5 TEACHERS ARE ALWAYS IN A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR LEARNERS, WHETHER AT THE EDUCATION SETTING WHERE THEY TEACH OR NOT**

Teachers hold a unique position of influence and trust that should not be violated or compromised. They exercise their responsibilities in ways that recognise there are limits or boundaries to their relationships with learners. The following examples outline some of those limits.

A professional relationship **will** be violated if a teacher

- has a sexual relationship with a learner
- uses sexual innuendo or inappropriate language and / or material with learners
- touches a learner without a valid reason
- holds conversations of a personal nature or has contact with a learner via written / electronic means (including email, letters, telephone, text messages or chat lines) without a valid context
- accepts gifts, which could be reasonably perceived as being used to influence them, from learners or their parents / carers.

A professional relationship **may** be compromised if a teacher

- attends parties or socialises with learners
- invites a learner or learners back to their home, particularly if no-one else is present.

**RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS / CARERS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**

**PRINCIPLE 1.6 TEACHERS MAINTAIN A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS / CARERS**

Teachers should be respectful of, and courteous to, parents and carers.

Teachers

- consider parents / carers' perspectives when making decisions which have an impact on the education or wellbeing of a learner
- communicate and consult with parents / carers in a timely, understandable and sensitive manner
- take appropriate action when responding to parental concerns.

**PRINCIPLE 1.7 TEACHERS WORK IN COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEARNERS' FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**

Teachers recognise their learners come from a diverse range of cultural contexts, and seek to work collaboratively with learners' families and communities within those contexts.

**RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES**

**PRINCIPLE 1.8 COLLEGIALITY IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE WORK OF TEACHERS**

Teachers demonstrate collegiality by

- treating each other with courtesy and respect
- valuing the input of their colleagues
- using appropriate forums for constructive debate on professional matters
- sharing expertise and knowledge in a variety of collaborative contexts
- respecting different approaches to teaching
- providing support for each other, particularly those new to the profession
- sharing information relating to the wellbeing of learners.



## Section 2 Personal conduct

**PRINCIPLE 2.1** THE PERSONAL CONDUCT OF A TEACHER WILL HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE PROFESSIONAL STANDING OF THAT TEACHER AND ON THE PROFESSION AS A WHOLE

Although there is no definitive boundary between the personal and professional conduct of a teacher, it is expected that teachers will

- be positive role models in education settings and in the community
- respect the rule of law and provide a positive example in the performance of civil obligations
- not exploit their position for personal or financial gain
- ensure their personal or financial interests do not interfere with the performance of their duties
- act with discretion and maintain confidentiality when discussing workplace issues.

## Section 3 Professional competence

**PRINCIPLE 3.1** TEACHERS VALUE THEIR PROFESSIONALISM, AND SET AND MAINTAIN HIGH STANDARDS OF COMPETENCE

Teachers

- are knowledgeable in their areas of expertise
- are committed to pursuing their own professional learning
- complete their duties in a responsible, thorough and timely way.

**PRINCIPLE 3.2** TEACHERS ARE AWARE OF THE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS THAT PERTAIN TO THEIR PROFESSION. IN PARTICULAR, THEY ARE COGNISANT OF THEIR LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATION TO

- discrimination, harassment and vilification
- negligence
- mandatory reporting
- privacy
- occupational health and safety
- teacher registration.



# THE VICTORIAN TEACHING PROFESSION CODE OF ETHICS

As teachers, we use our expert knowledge to provide experiences that inspire and facilitate the learning of those we teach.

We are a significant force in developing a knowledgeable, creative, productive and democratic society. The values that underpin our profession are **integrity**, **respect** and **responsibility**.

We hold a unique position of trust and influence, which we recognise in our relationships with learners, parents / carers, colleagues and the community.

## WE DEMONSTRATE OUR INTEGRITY BY

- acting in the best interest of learners
- maintaining a professional relationship with learners, parents / carers, colleagues and the community
- behaving in ways that respect and advance the profession.

## WE DEMONSTRATE OUR RESPECT BY

- acting with care and compassion
- treating learners fairly and impartially
- holding our colleagues in high regard
- acknowledging parents and carers as partners in the education of their children.

## WE DEMONSTRATE OUR RESPONSIBILITY BY

- providing quality teaching
- maintaining and developing our professional practice
- working cooperatively with colleagues in the best interest of our learners.

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS CODE IS TO

- state the value that guides our practice and conduct
- enable us as a profession to affirm our public accountability
- promote public confidence in our profession.

The Code sets out the ideals to which we aspire.



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